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ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Note by the Secretary-General

1. At its forty-seventh session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 47/190 of 22 December 1992, in which it endorsed the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 1/ Agenda 21 2/ and the Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests, 3/ as adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development on 14 June 1992.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly, upon the recommendation of the Conference, decided to convene, not later than 1997, a special session for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of Agenda 21. In that context, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its forty-ninth session a report containing recommendations for consideration by the Assembly on the format, scope and organizational aspects of such a special session.

3. The Conference was a landmark event which had a profound effect on the work of organs, programmes and organizations of the United Nations system, as well as activities at the regional and national levels to achieve sustainable development. The Commission on Sustainable Development, as the central intergovernmental body established to monitor the implementation of decisions and recommendations of the Conference, launched a detailed integrated review of progress achieved in the implementation of 40 chapters of Agenda 21 and other outcomes of the Conference at the international, regional and national levels. While adopting its multi-year programme of work for the period 1993-1997, the Commission decided to undertake at its 1997 session an overall review of the progress achieved with a view to preparing for the special session of the General Assembly envisaged in resolution 47/190.

4. A number of important intergovernmental processes recommended in Agenda 21 have taken place or are under way. These include the elaboration of an

international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, the convening of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the work of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. The results of and follow-up to these activities, together with ongoing work related to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, are of direct relevance to the forthcoming review and appraisal of the progress achieved since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

5. Furthermore, major international meetings that took place after the Conference, such as the World Conference on Human Rights, held at Vienna, the International Conference on Population and Development, held at Cairo, as well as the forthcoming World Summit for Social Development, to be held at Copenhagen, the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, to be held at Beijing and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) to be held at Istanbul, are also closely related to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development, since they deal with crucial aspects of the international struggle towards sustainable development. The outcomes of these activities need to be integrated in the comprehensive review of Agenda 21.

6. Another crucial process of direct relevance to the forthcoming review of Agenda 21 is the ongoing work on the elaboration of an agenda for development, which will continue during the present session of the General Assembly.

7. Although some important experiences have been already gained since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development through the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and the High-Level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development, as well as through other intergovernmental processes listed above, at this stage it would seem premature to formulate specific suggestions on the format, scope and organizational aspects of the special session of the General Assembly in 1997. In the light of the above, the Secretary-General intends to come up with such proposals at a later date.

Notes

1/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992 (A/CONF.151/26/Rev.1 (Vol. I and Vol. I/Corr.1, Vol. II, Vol. III and Vol. III/Corr.1)) (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda, vol. I: Resolutions adopted by the Conference, resolution I, annex I.

2/ Ibid., annex II.

3/ Ibid., annex III.